News release

Stern Report welcomed. UK science now needs to do more.

30 October 2006

Sir Nick Stern has led a major review of the economics of climate change. His report outlines the economic challenges it poses and how they can be met, in the UK and globally. Research carried out at the Met Office, in its world-leading Hadley Centre, formed the backbone of the scientific effort that went into the report.

The UK leads the field in climate research, with the Met Office at the helm. Climate experts are keen to keep the country at the forefront of this important area of science and are looking at what investment will be needed in the future. The Stern Report clearly shows that there are huge amounts of money at stake and that there is real potential in terms of what relevant climate research could do.

Much more work is needed if we are to fully answer the questions that policymakers and the public are now asking about adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change. This requires two things, investment and co-ordination of the UK research effort.

- The Met Office supercomputing facility used to rank third in the world, in terms of power, but despite a recent doubling in the size of this facility at its base in Exeter, the UK's national weather service is now 69th on an equivalent basis.
- With current scientific understanding, climate scientists could usefully use up to 10,000 times the computing capability that is presently in operation.
- The decision about how much supercomputing to use is limited by technical feasibility and affordability. However, the potential costs of climate change are several orders of magnitude larger than the costs of improving climate projections.

Mark Hutchinson, Chief Executive of the Met Office commented: "The true cost of calculating the risk that global warming poses to the UK's way of life is currently not possible. The Met Office has some of the best climate scientists in the world and knows best how to use its data, but it could do so much more for the benefit of the country given the chance".

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